

Lapis Nephriticus

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Lapis Nephriticus

by [carrotgrizzly](#), [spaceChai](#)

Summary

Satoru, the newly appointed head of the Gojo Clan, discovers that he is destined to marry Zenin Megumi. However, haunted by a past encounter with a Zenin that nearly cost him his life, Satoru despises the idea of being wed to someone from the Zenin family. Instead, he yearns to be with the mysterious young man whose captivating green eyes have been haunting his dreams since he was a child.

Notes

Hello, this is a Collab Fic of [carrotgrizzly](#) and [SpaceChai](#) 🎵...

The first time he remembers him clearly in his dreams was when he was six. Satoru had been dreaming of this other boy as far as he could remember but it was at six years old when he first remembers him clearly even after waking up. A long messy haired individual with the warmest green eyes he had ever seen and the most beautiful smile and prettiest face... Megu...Megu-nii...Satoru would call his name while chasing after him...but every time the other boy would look back at him and smile, he would utter a different name...Rin-kun ...

Frustration consumed Satoru as he confronted the senior heads of the clan, vehemently protesting against the arranged marriage with a Zenin. His anger blazed, and he expressed his disdain for the Zenins, his gaze fixed on the senior heads.

"Are you all out of your minds, arranging a marriage with a Zenin?" Satoru's voice reverberated with anger. "And you are well aware of my hatred for them!"

The senior heads calmly explained that the marriage had been arranged by Satoru's father when the young Zenin was born.

"And how old is he now? Three?" Satoru scoffed sarcastically.

"Fifteen," came the response.

"You've got to be kidding me! Ten years younger than me!" Satoru exclaimed frustration etched on his face as he threw his hands up in the air.

"Gojo-sama, you have reached the age where you should marry and

continue the clan's lineage," one of the senior heads reasoned.

Satoru's irritation intensified as he replied, "Ha! I can produce heirs whenever I want, but I will do so on my own terms!" He abruptly stood up from his seat at the head of the table, anger propelling him to walk away from the senior heads, leaving behind a room filled with tension and unresolved issues.

Marriage. He doesn't really mind it but now, after knowing who his bride is, the mere mention of it never failed to irritate Gojo Satoru. As the future head of his clan, he understood the responsibility of producing the next generation's heir. However, if only this arranged marriage wasn't with a Zenin, perhaps he would consider it if he could choose anyone he desired to be his dutiful wife. Even the courtesans he occasionally frequented in the enticing allure of the red-light district seemed like a better option than this Zenin bride he was being forced into union with. The very idea angered him to no end.

But why did he hate the Zenin clan so much? Well, despite being one of the most influential families in Japan, the Zenins were involved in shady underground activities. And there was one particular incident that fueled Satoru's animosity towards them. It happened when he and his best friend were tasked with escorting a princess safely back to her domain. An occult group called Star Religious Group had hired assassins to eliminate the princess of the Amanai. The Amanai clan head pleaded with the Gojo clan for assistance, and Satoru agreed to take on the mission.

During that fateful encounter, Satoru came face to face with the notorious Zenin assassin known as the Invisible Man. The Zenin assassin almost succeeded in killing Satoru and his best friend, but in the end, Satoru emerged victorious. Reflecting on that incident, Satoru couldn't help but feel a surge of irritation. The Gojo clan had come dangerously close to losing its future head. Though he had managed to defeat the masked Zenin assassin, he regretted not being able to kill the bastard outright and instead, settled for severing one of his arms as a grim reminder.

The first time their paths crossed was when Gojo Rintaro was just a ten-year-old boy attending a gathering of noblemen with his father at the imperial palace. The looming threat of war with foreign subjugators had brought together the heads of prominent clans for a contingency meeting. While the elders engaged in their discussions, the young heirs were relegated to a separate room. Rin had little interest in mingling with the other heirs. To him, they were nothing more than mediocre children, unaware of the grave danger that Yamato, their land, faced. These heirs casually laughed off the impending foreign invasion, boasting about how their clans' armies and fighters would effortlessly crush any invaders. They were a clueless and uninspiring bunch.

Growing restless, Rin decided to leave the room, earning puzzled looks from the other heirs. As he made his way down the hallway, he heard enchanting music resonating through the air. It was the melodic sound of a windpipe instrument. Compelled by its allure, he followed the music, winding his way through the garden until he reached an old maple tree. There, beneath its branches, sat a teenager dressed in a dark green kimono, his lips pressed against a bamboo flute. When the teenager opened his eyes and met Rin's gaze, the young Gojo was transfixed. The teenager's eyes were a captivating shade of jade, framed by long, elegant lashes. Pausing his playing, the teen smiled warmly at Rin and greeted him with a simple "Hello."

Caught off guard by the encounter, Rin blushed slightly in embarrassment before offering a curt bow in response. He had been about to take his leave when the teenager spoke again, extending the flute towards him. "Would you like to play?" The invitation took Rin by surprise. He looked at the flute, then back at the teen's face, noticing the genuine kindness in his smile—unlike the forced expressions of the others he had encountered. Intrigued, Rin stepped closer and accepted the flute with hesitation, examining it. He had never before touched or learned to play a musical instrument. His time had been consumed by studying politics and martial arts. This was an entirely new experience for him.

A playful chuckle escaped the teen's lips, causing Rin to snap his head up and swallow nervously. The young man before him was undeniably attractive, a fact Rin couldn't help but acknowledge. "You're really cute, Gojo bocchama," the teen remarked, prompting Rin to regard him suspiciously. After all, the Gojos were known for their distinctive snow-white hair and blue eyes, so it was not uncommon for others to recognize him. However, he had no recollection of ever meeting this person. "Who are you?" Rin asked, his tone cold, although unintentionally so.

"My name is Meguru," the teen replied, stretching out his delicate hand toward Rin. Rin glanced at the outstretched hand, then back at Meguru's face—undeniably pretty. Blushing, he hesitantly reached out and shook the young man's hand, the meeting of their palms marking the beginning of an unexpected connection.

"Satoru, what's going on with you?" Suguru's voice cuts through Satoru's thoughts, snapping him back to reality. His face had been clouded with a serious expression, and his distant demeanor had not gone unnoticed. Satoru quickly shakes off his reverie, offering a casual wave to his friend and forcing a nonchalant smile.

"Ah, nothing much," he replies, attempting to brush off Suguru's suspicion. But his best friend sees right through the facade, peering at him skeptically over the rim of his wine cup.

"I know your 'nothing much' is more than meets the eye," Suguru retorts sarcastically. Satoru simply shrugs, downing his cup of wine in one swift motion.

Lately, Satoru had been weighed down by stress. Last night, he had confronted his father for the third time about the arranged marriage, but the old man had initially refused to entertain the idea of canceling the engagement.

Satoru had expressed his outrage, exclaiming in disbelief, "You expect me to marry... a child, a spawn of the Zenins?"

"Satoru, Zenin Megumi is extraordinary. I wouldn't have gone head-to-head with the wretched Naobito Zenin to secure the young Megumi as your spouse if I didn't believe he was deserving of being your partner. Of being a part of the Gojo family," his father had reasoned again, attempting to make Satoru understand, but of course Satoru does not want to understand no matter how beautiful his father paint Zenin Megumi to him.

"A Zenin nearly took my life, and you wouldn't even have an heir if he had succeeded," Satoru retorted angrily. "You know the kind of people the Zenins are."

"Satoru..."

"Don't I hold the position of the clan's head now? Shouldn't I have a say in this?" Satoru gritted his teeth, glaring at his father.

His father sighed, burying his face in his hands. Satoru had been so adamant about retaliating that it seemed it has gotten through the old patriarch. He then gives a serious gaze upon his son. "If there is someone you truly love, then I will cancel the engagement," he declared unexpectedly, surprising Satoru. It was a tempting offer.

"Huh, someone I truly love..." he pauses and the green-eyed young man in his dreams appears in his mind, but does he count? A stranger in his dream?. "Of course, I have someone," Satoru scoffed, pretending to be confident. In reality, it was a lie.

"You know, Satoru," his father began, "Zenin Megumi has grown up believing he is destined to marry you. I can't help but think he would be devastated."

"Listen, pops. This arranged marriage was not my idea... I refuse to marry someone I don't love, especially if they're a Zenin."

His father couldn't hide his defeat, and Satoru felt a sense of satisfaction. He wouldn't be forced into a marriage with a Zenin.

After his conversation with his father, Satoru went to sleep and found himself dreaming of the young man with green eyes once again. It had been a month since he last dreamed of him, and Truthfully, Satoru missed him when he didn't appear in his dreams, even though he knew he didn't exist in reality. If only he could marry the man from his dreams... he couldn't deny that he was in love with him.

A tantalizing laugh interrupts his thoughts, and he turns his attention to the courtesan wrapped around his left arm. Her words, dripping with allure, stir his senses.

"Gojo-sama, aren't you here to let loose? Please, indulge yourself while you're in my presence," she purrs, her eyes fluttering in a bewitching display. The courtesan is beautiful, with black hair and green eyes, although not an exact match to the boy of his dreams, and still bears an uncanny resemblance. Physically, she is the closest he has ever come to encountering his elusive dream boy. Satoru smiles at her and drains his wine glass.

"You're absolutely right. I am here to relieve some stress..." he replies nonchalantly stroking the hair of the courtesan who burrowed her head in his arms, though Suguru, his best friend, observes him with a worried expression.

"Tell me, Suguru, what's the best way to break off an arranged marriage?" Satoru suddenly asks, catching his best friend off guard.

Suguru furrows his brow, even more concerned about Satoru's state of mind. He's well aware of Satoru's predicament with the arranged marriage to the Zenins. He supports his best friend and understands his rebellious behavior. After all, who would want to be tied to someone who is related to the person who almost killed them? But then, Suguru had met Zenin Megumi when Satoru asked him to investigate his future bride. It dawns on Suguru that he hasn't reported his findings to Satoru, nor has Satoru asked about them. He's conflicted. On one hand, he supports his best friend's desires, and on the other, he believes Zenin Megumi is a good match for Satoru. In fact, he may be too good for Satoru to dismiss as a wife. It would be a shame to see such a genuinely good person married to someone who prejudicially hates him. Although, there is the possibility that Satoru could develop feelings for Megumi, considering Satoru's taste in partners aligns with Megumi's physical attributes...

'Never mind' , Suguru thinks, pushing those thoughts aside.

"Maybe you could say you'd 'kill for a smoke' in front of his family, or purposely tan under the sun until you're dark enough to be rejected by his clan," Suguru suggests, hoping to lighten the mood. Satoru bursts into laughter.

"I bet that won't work on the Zenins... they're too Hard-Faced," Satoru responds, still chuckling.

"Then what's on your mind?" Suguru asks cautiously, popping a grape into his mouth.

"The old man said if I have someone I truly love, he might consider canceling the engagement," Satoru reveals, being fed a slice of apple by the courtesan.

"Do you have..." Suguru begins, but Satoru vehemently interrupts.

"Of course not!" Satoru denies, his voice filled with conviction.

"I thought so," Suguru sighs, his suspicions confirmed.

"So, that's why I just have to find someone," Satoru says conspiratorially, a mischievous smile forming on his lips as he pulls the courtesan closer to him.

"Say, Satsuki-chan, would you like to play a game? I'll reward you handsomely if you play it well," Satoru proposes to the courtesan. She coyly laughs and asks, "What game are we playing, Gojo-sama?"

"It's a game of pretend..."

"A courtesan! You're marrying a pleasure woman? What are you playing at?" Gojo's father shouted at his son, his voice filled with anger.

"She is an oiran, and yes, I am marrying her. We love each other," Satoru matched his father's anger, standing his ground.

Satoru had brought Chitose, known as the courtesan Satsuki, to their mansion to introduce her as the woman he loved. His father looked scandalized upon seeing her, a courtesan from the Yoishiwara District. Was his son playing a cruel joke on him, or had he lost his mind? And to make matters worse, the woman bore a striking resemblance to Megumi.

"Ha, Satoru, don't lie to me... Are you sure you don't want to pursue your marriage with Zenin Megumi?" his father sarcastically prodded. His gaze then shifted to the shoji door where the woman sat silently on the other side, listening to their conversation. The former head of the clan didn't hate the woman; it was just that she lacked noble blood, and he had already envisioned someone else as his future in-law. Besides, the courtesan's features mirrored those of his son's intended bride.

"Chitose and I are deeply in love. You know I frequented the place where she works because you always had me followed. The reason I go there is because of her. I fell in love," Satoru explained with sincerity and conviction.

"I don't believe this," his father said incredulously.

"Don't believe or just won't accept," Satoru scoffed.

"Both!" his father retorted.

"Well, you'll just have to accept it. As the new head, I am not marrying a Zenin. I am marrying the person I love," Satoru shot back, slamming his hands on the chabudai.

His father closed his eyes, covering them with his palms, shaking his head. *What an idiot*, he thought to himself about his son. He then recalls a memory.

When Megumi entered the world, it was a fortuitous encounter for nine-year-old Satoru and his father. They stumbled upon the young couple who would become Megumi's parents purely by accident. Satoru's father recognized the baby's father—a feared rogue Zenin, even among their own kin. The couple's carriage had suffered a broken wheel while they were en route to a midwife in the neighboring town. Satoru's father, passing by at the right moment, heard the anguished cries of the laboring mother. Without hesitation, he offered his help, witnessing the young Zenin's desperate desire for his wife to be aided.

Thus, Satoru's father invited them to ride in his automobile, driving straight to the midwife. The labor was arduous, lasting for five long hours. Satoru's father couldn't bring himself to leave, curious in seeing the anxiety and concern etched on the young father's face — After all, this man was someone that is feared. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, Megumi was born. But there was silence—a chilling silence that pierced the room. The baby did not cry and appeared cold and lifeless, causing the midwife to pronounce the devastating verdict: he was dead.

The young Zenin father crumbled, falling to his knees in despair, while the sound of heart-wrenching sobs echoed from the grieving mother. Intrigued and filled with sorrow, young Satoru ventured into the room to catch a glimpse of the lifeless baby cradled in the midwife's arms and upon seeing the tiny thing, Satoru felt lured. This precious child, with long lashes and delicate features, stirred something within him. As he touched the baby's face, an inexplicable spark seemed to surge through the air—a gust of powerful wind swept through the house, flinging open the windows. The lamps flickered and trembled under its force. And when the wind subsided, a cry pierced the stillness. The baby was alive.

Astonishment rippled through everyone present, none more so than Satoru's father. The bewildered midwife wasted no time, placing the now-crying infant on his mother's bosom, where he could finally begin to suckle milk. It was a miracle, a true blessing.

"Father, I felt a spark when I touched the baby's face," Satoru confided after they bid farewell to the couple and midwife.

"Really?" his father inquired, intrigue dancing in his eyes.

"Yes, it felt like an electric surge from my heart... It's strange, I've felt something similar in my dreams, the one I told you about the boy with green eyes." young Satoru revealed.

"Isn't that curious," his father mused, a peculiar glimmer in his gaze. "Perhaps you are destined to meet him again."

"Destined, like soulmates?" Satoru questioned with sparkling eyes, his curiosity piqued.

"Hmm... maybe," his father replied, leaving the possibility lingering in the air.

Though young Satoru may not have recalled the memory, it was his touch that had breathed life back into Megumi's fragile existence and the patriarch Gojo saw that as a sign.

He looked at Satoru with a serious expression.

"I hope you won't regret anything. The path ahead of you will be thorny," Satoru's father warned him. But Satoru interpreted his words differently, understanding that the Zenin's wouldn't take this well and might seek revenge. Well, if they tried, he would have a reason to fight them, at least. Satoru contemplated inwardly.

"I am not going to regret anything... I am truly happy instead," Satoru replied with unwavering conviction, putting on a convincing act.

"Then let's schedule a visit to the Zenins," his father said, ringing a bell to summon a servant and the young Gojo smiles triumphantly.

The sound of rapid footsteps reverberated through the hallways of the Zenin house as Maki sprinted as fast as possible. Just returning late from an assignment, She ran into her infuriating cousin, Naoya, near the entrance.

"Oh, Maki, you're alive," Naoya greeted with his usual sarcasm. Maki usually ignored him since he took pleasure in taunting her and Mai, but Naoya seemed to have a purpose for being there today. Was he waiting for her? Trying to brush him off, Maki continued walking, but Naoya confided in her like a gossip girl, "Did you know Gojo Satoru wants to cancel his engagement with Megumi?" There was amusement in his voice, along with a hint of slyness. Maki abruptly stopped and glanced back at her older cousin, who smirked at her.

"Cancel!?" Maki exclaimed incredulously. Questions flooded her mind. Why? How could this happen? Didn't the Gojos already provide a significant dowry for Megumi to be their bride? And it wasn't a small sum either.

"Haha... your face is so funny..." Naoya teased, earning a glare from Maki.

"So, ya know, Maki, if Megumi doesn't marry the young Gojo head, he has to marry me, right?" Naoya smiled darkly, and Maki struggled to restrain herself from attacking him.

"I need to hear it from Megumi himself," she stated firmly before breaking into a brisk walk, which soon turned into a full-on run, while Naoya's infuriating laughter faded away.

Turning another corner, Maki seethed with anger at how far Megumi's quarters were from the main building and from everyone else in the

main family. Although his place boasted a beautiful garden, it was secluded and separated from the Zenin compound by a wall that housed the security ops quarters at the other side, a beautiful prison. Megumi, her nephew, deserved so much better—a better place and a better life.

Finally reaching her destination, Maki slammed open the Shoji door to Megumi's room. There, on the edge of the engawa, sat Megumi in a relaxed manner, gazing at the bright full moon while cradling a teacup. His unruly long hair cascaded untied over his shoulder like a black curtain, and the moon's light cast a halo-like glow around his head.. As he noticed Maki's presence, her favorite part of him came into view—his cold, almond-shaped, jade eyes, looking back at her. He looked like a fairy, perhaps a moon fairy.

"Megumi..." Maki began as she approached the boy. "The marriage with the Gojo head? Is it true?" she sounded desperate.

"Yes, my husband-to-be called it off because he wants to marry the woman he loves," Megumi replied indifferently.

"That fucker..." Maki exclaimed, frustration evident as she ran her fingers through her hair. "How could he, when you were practically raised to be his wife! Screw that asshole!" Maki vented her anger, clenching her fist as she cursed the young Gojo head.

"It's okay, Maki-ne. I don't wish to marry a man who doesn't want me. It would only be painful for me," Megumi explained solemnly, his gaze cast downward. Maki couldn't help but sigh as she glimpsed a trace of sadness behind her nephew's beautiful eyes. She sat closer to him and rested her head on his shoulder.

"And here I thought you'd finally be free from this shitty household," she said, annoyance lacing her words.

Megumi smiled appreciatively, grateful for the caring and adoring presence of Maki and Mai, his twin sister.

"What about the former head of the Gojo clan? Doesn't that old man adore you so much? Will he get back the money he gave to Naobito?" Maki asked, still sounding infuriated.

"They're coming here tomorrow to discuss new terms, according to the servant," Megumi calmly explained, causing Maki to abruptly look at him.

"So, the Gojo family still hasn't given up on you?" she asked a mix of curiosity and hope in her voice.

"I hope so," Megumi sighed, closing his eyes.

"They'd better... And I hope they'll find you a much better husband. You're too precious to be the wife of an asshole. If not, I'll take you somewhere far away from here. I refuse to let you marry that bastard Naoya. It makes me sick," Maki vowed, her frustration clear.

Megumi couldn't help but chuckle, earning a playful slap on the arm from his aunt.

"Mai-nee-san said the same thing earlier," Megumi disclosed, trying to ease Maki's annoyance. He then leaned his head on her shoulder.

"I'm grateful to have two aunts who care for me,"

"My beautiful boy, you are our treasure," Maki whispered softly, caressing her nephew's hair as they both gazed at the moon.

Satoru found himself trapped in the clutches of a haunting dream. His body ached all over, and as he knelt on the ground, his gaze fell upon a puddle of water revealing his bloodied reflection. In this dream, he appeared to be fifteen years old, his eyes glowing in the darkness while his breaths grew heavy.

"Gojo Rintaro, your arrogance has finally brought you to your knees," a malicious voice sneered at him. "For someone so young, you've acted high and mighty. Look at where that arrogance has landed you." Laughter and mocking echoed around him, amplifying his humiliation.

"Kill him..." Satoru felt a shiver crawl down his spine upon hearing the chilling order. He willed his body to move, but it refused to obey. Though he knew it was just a dream, being on his knees like this felt degrading. He had two choices—to be killed by his enemies within the confines of this dream or to wake up.

Then, he heard his own voice speak from within the dream. "I cannot die here. I haven't told him how much he means to me...about my feelings for him."

It was at that moment Satoru realized the extent of his dream self's injuries—multiple stab wounds littered his body, and he found himself surrounded by the lifeless bodies of his enemies. It appeared he had been ambushed, and in his desperate fight for survival, he had managed to eliminate at least half of his foes. As one surviving enemy lunged at him, ready to strike, Satoru attempted to parry the blow with his sword, prepared to accept his fate. However, before the enemy's blade could find its mark, an arrow swiftly shot through the air, piercing his attacker and sending him hurtling to his demise.

"RIN!!!" a familiar voice called out, causing Satoru's heart to race with anticipation. Arrows whizzed past him, followed by the cries of pain from his enemies. Satoru sensed a presence beside him, picking him up and then cradling and supporting him. He looked up and there he was—his beloved.

Desperate to touch his love's face, Satoru extended a trembling hand, witnessing the worry etched in his beloved's beautiful green eyes. He couldn't bear to see that expression on his beautiful face; he wanted his beloved to always wear that familiar, radiant smile.

"Rin, stay with me..." his beloved pleaded, the sound reverberating through Satoru's consciousness. He longed to correct him, to say that his name was Satoru and not Rin, but instead, he heard himself speak to the young man.

"I love you... Meguru-ni...always have..."

Then, with a jolt, Satoru woke up from his tormenting dream, his body drenched in sweat, his heart pounding in his chest.

When morning arrived, Satoru felt a restlessness stirring within him. The remnants of his dream from the previous night lingered in his mind, leaving a bittersweet ache in his heart. For years, he had dreamt of the boy with striking green eyes, but last night was different. It was the first time his dream self had confessed, revealing the depth of his feelings. He had witnessed their interactions from their youthful meeting to their more recent encounters in his dreams. Sometimes, he wished he could control his dream self. Rin, his dream self was cold, distant, and indifferent—qualities he couldn't fathom winning over someone as incredible and sweet as Meguru.

"Are you nervous, boy?" his father asked, sensing Satoru's unease. "You

seem on edge since we left home this morning."

"I just had a... strange dream, that's all," Satoru replied, trying to brush it off.

"Is it about the boy with the green eyes?" his father inquired, a knowing glint in his eyes. Satoru felt unsettled and suspicious, narrowing his gaze at his father.

"How would you even know about my dreams?"

"When you were a young lad, you used to tell me about this recurring dream about a boy with the most captivating green eyes," his father revealed, accompanied by a knowing smile. Satoru looked at his father's side profile and found it unnerving that his father knew about Meguru.

"Well, that was a long time ago. I don't even remember," he lied, attempting to dismiss the conversation. He sighed, realizing he needed to focus on the task at hand. They were en route to the Zenin Mansion to break off his engagement and negotiate new terms.

The Zenin estate was a considerable distance away from their own, typically requiring a full day of travel by carriage. However, with the introduction of automobiles from the West, transportation had become faster and more convenient, particularly for the wealthy. Satoru tried to convince himself that he wasn't nervous, but an unsettling feeling accompanied his journey to the Zenin Mansion. He wondered if he would have the opportunity to meet his supposed bride-to-be. He had never seen Zenin Megumi in person, although his father had spoken of him with great admiration. Perhaps, he truly was as remarkable as his father had described. It occurred to Satoru that he hadn't even inquired about his best friend's findings regarding his prospective bride, but he quickly dismissed the thought. It didn't matter. Satoru

had no desire to involve himself with the Zenin family.

"It's a shame that our Megumi won't be able to marry the Gojo head, but there's no point dwelling on it now." Naobito's words lacked any hint of regret or apology, and Satoru could see that the old Zenin head showed no remorse or sadness over the canceled arranged marriage. It was a stark contrast to his own father, who genuinely seemed regretful about the broken engagement.

"It truly is a shame," Satoru heard his father murmur as he slowly sipped his green tea.

"I could return the money, but it might take some time," Naobito replied, also taking a sip of his tea.

"No... I have a nephew in the branch family who is of marriageable age. I would like him to take my son's place as Megumi's future husband," Satoru's father suggested, placing his teacup down on the low table. Naobito glanced at Satoru's father over the rim of his teacup, appearing deep in thought. The two old men engaged in a silent stare-down and Satoru wasn't sure what they were thinking, but he knew Megumi was at the center of it all.

Contrary to his previous belief, it seemed that the Zenin family had been coerced into having Megumi marry into their family. Satoru found himself slightly annoyed with his father, who seemed determined to bring this Zenin Megumi into the Gojo family. He wondered how Megumi had managed to charm his father. Satoru's legs were beginning to grow numb from sitting in seiza position for so long, and the tedious, dull conversation between the two old men was becoming unbearable. He wanted to escape; he was incredibly bored.

"Now that we've agreed to cancel my marriage with the Zenin bride, I'll take my leave so that the two of you can discuss the renegotiation of the marriage terms," young Gojo said, displaying an exaggerated

enthusiasm to the two patriarchs out of the blue, earning a glare from his father and an indifferent shrug from the old Zenin head.

"Satoru, mind your manners!" his father scolded, while Naobito Zenin waved his hand dismissively at the young head.

"Do as you please, Master Gojo, just don't forget to sign the annulment papers for the marriage," Naobito Zenin remarked casually.

A servant then entered the room with the documents and young Gojo promptly signed the papers laid out before him and left the two old men to discuss the new terms of the marriage.

Satoru strolled through the Zenin estate, and he cannot help but compare. Unlike the Gojo's who had remodeled their estate into a neoclassical architectural style of the West, The Zenins still kept their historical and local design with admirable Zen gardens. The Zen gardens that adorned the property exuded a serene beauty, while the Zenin family members proudly wore their traditional garments. Satoru, on the other hand, blended Western and Eastern influences with his button-up shirt beneath his kimono.

Walking alongside him were a Gojo attendant and a female Zenin servant, the latter acting as a knowledgeable guide, sharing details about the estate. Only fifteen minutes had passed since Satoru left the room with his father and old Naobito, yet it felt like an eternity. He wished he had invited Suguru to join him; perhaps they could have at least found some amusement in their mischief or playful banter.

As they ventured further away from the main house, a captivating sound reached Satoru's ears—a hauntingly beautiful melody played on a Shakuhachi bamboo flute. The familiar tune caused his heart to race and his world to momentarily stop. It felt as though the music was beckoning to him, like a siren's call. Unconsciously, he gravitated towards the source, which emanated from beyond the wall.

Before he could reach the wall, however, the Zenin servant abruptly darted in front of him, dropping to her knees in a respectful bow. "Gojo-sama, I humbly apologize, but this area is strictly off-limits. Only those authorized by Naobito-sama may proceed," she implored. Satoru was taken aback by the servant's exaggerated reaction, further fueling his curiosity about what secrets the Zenins concealed behind

that wall. He glanced at his attendant, blinked twice, and received a nod in return from the other man. The Gojo attendant then adopted a friendly smile, stepping closer to the Zenin servant and offering a helping hand.

"My lady, would you mind assisting me in bringing snacks to Master Gojo?" he asked, smoothly diverting her attention.

"Um, but..." the Zenin servant hesitated, torn between conflicting instructions.

"Don't worry, I'll remain here and wait. I won't venture any further," Satoru assured, but obviously, it was a lie. He flashed a charming smile at the Zenin servant, causing her cheeks to flush and her words to stumble.

"Ah... y-yes, Gojo-sama. Please wait here," she stammered, before departing with the Gojo servant, who engaged her in light conversation, skillfully distracting her.

As they turned a corner, Satoru seized the opportunity and scaled the wall, peering over its edge. A whole new world greeted his eyes—a small Minka house nestled amidst a vibrant garden. The wall, as it turned out, was a covered walkway connecting to the main building. This garden differed greatly from the manicured landscapes of patterned sands and trimmed topiary, and bonsai trees he had seen earlier, this one possessed a more untamed quality. Azaleas and wildflowers painted the garden in a riot of colors, while young trees stood tall in any direction. However, what captured his attention was the grand Sakura tree standing near a tranquil pond, and beneath its enchanting branches sat a figure on a wooden log—a person with disheveled, black hair fashioned into a puffed ponytail. Dressed in a dark blue yukata adorned with checkered patterns, this individual was the source of the mesmerizing melody. When their eyes met, Satoru's breath caught in his throat, nearly causing him to lose balance on the corridor's roof. The person before him appeared younger than him, perhaps around fifteen and he looks exactly like the boy from his recurring dreams—his cherished dream boy, Meguru.

The boy's melodic flute playing came to an abrupt halt as Satoru gracefully leaped down from the wall and approached him. Satoru

couldn't tear his eyes away from the captivating beauty standing before him. Those striking jade-colored eyes held an irresistible allure, he truly cannot believe this, that the one he loves and has been pining for all these years is real.

"STOP!" Satoru froze in his tracks, his heart racing as he heard the boy's commanding voice. It was the same voice that had filled him with elation in his dreams. Just a few more steps and he could touch him, only a small pond separated them. But despite Satoru's enchantment and excitement, the boy seemed to regard him with disdain. Satoru frowned, wondering why his dream boy didn't smile at him as he did in his dreams. Nevertheless, it didn't deter Satoru; he found himself drawn to this cold side of him.

"You're trespassing in this area. No one is allowed to enter here without permission from the head clan," his beautiful boy, Meguru stated coldly.

"I heard the most beautiful melody on the other side and couldn't help but admire the one playing such ethereal and poetic music," Satoru explained with a charming smile adorning his face. "And to my surprise, I saw a beautiful fairy playing it." he continues attempting to charm his dream boy. Then curiosity got the better of him "Tell me, is your name Meguru?" he asked anticipating his dream boy's answer. However, the boy just looked at him stonily, rose to his feet, and turned his back to walk away.

Undeterred, Satoru skipped across the stone steps in the pond and reached out to grab the young boy's hand. As soon as he touched him, a feeling like an electric shock coursed in both of their hands making them look at each other in shell shock. but then, the boy blinked and swatted his hand away with a hiss. "Don't touch me!" he exclaimed, looking at him with eyes filled with loathing. Satoru was taken aback by the intensity of the boy's reaction and gaze. "Why?" Satoru muttered. "Why are you so angry at me?"

"Are you serious?" the boy look at him incredulously. "You, a stranger, practically trespass here without permission..." Satoru interjected, "Oh, uh, my name is Gojo Satoru, the head of the Gojo

Clan." He hoped that revealing his identity would assuage his dream boy's anger, flashing his winning smile that usually makes the receiver swoon or blush. But once again, he was bewildered by the boy's reaction. His dream boy let out an annoyed sigh, pinching the bridge of his nose before looking at him.

"Yes, I do have an idea of who you are. Your hair and eyes are a dead giveaway, not to mention your 'assholey' attitude that I've heard about in the rumors," the boy said blandly, and it somewhat irked Satoru. "Me... asshole!?" Satoru couldn't help but protest, but his young dream boy just gave him a withering look.

"Please leave, young master Gojo," his dream boy said, turning around once again to walk away from him. However, Satoru couldn't accept that. He grabbed his hand once more, earning another hiss from the boy, but Satoru refused to let go.

"I don't understand you!" Satoru exclaimed bewildered.

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm pretty sure I'm handsome aplenty. Why aren't you falling in love with me?" he asked perplexedly and his dream boy froze, looking at him as if he had grown two heads.

"EXCUSE ME," the boy scoffed, sounding scandalized. "You... Aren't you engaged to someone already?" His dream boy looked at him intensely.

"I broke it off today..." Satoru confessed.

"YES, I KNOW! But aren't you supposed to be ENGAGED with another person you love? That's why you broke off your marriage with the Zenin..." It suddenly clicked for Satoru that his dream boy's prickliness and coldness were likely due to his relationship status. He needed to correct him.

"Oh, that's not..."

"SATORU!" A reprimanding voice echoed from the corridor wall, surprising both of them. They turned to see Satoru's father walking toward them, wearing a serious expression, with a Zenin servant following closely behind.

Before Satoru could inquire about his father's unexpected presence, his dream boy broke free from his grip and walked toward Satoru's father. He bowed politely in front of the former Gojo head.

"It's been a long time, Gojo-sama." his dream boy greeted respectfully.

"It has indeed, my dearest boy." Satoru was astonished to witness his father offering his dream boy a gentle smile, one that he himself hadn't received in a while. What was their relationship? Satoru's curiosity got the better of him. With heavy steps, he approached them, positioning himself between them, crossing his arms, and glaring at his father, demanding answers.

"Ah, I see you've met my son," his father remarked, looking at Satoru disapprovingly before slowly letting out a smug smile after seeing his son's deep scowling face. It irked Satoru knowing that his father knew his dream boy all this time.

"Ah, yes... quite a menace and obstinate individual," his dream boy straightforwardly replied without batting an eye. Satoru spun around

to look at his dream boy in disbelief, while his father burst into laughter, tearing up a little and wiping them from the corner of his eyes. After a while, his father let out a heavy sigh, a regretful expression now adorning his face.

"Such a shame he won't marry you, Megumi..." Satoru's father lamented.

And those words echoed in Satoru's brain... Megumi... *Megumi* ...
Megumi!???

"You're Zenin Megumi!???" He stared shocked at the shorter boy, whose sharp, almond-shaped green eyes glared at him fiercely. Satoru's heart sank realizing the mistake he had made. Megumi clasped his hands together below his stomach and bowed to him..

"Nice to meet you too, young master Gojo," Megumi greeted coolly. Gojo stood frozen and his hearing became distorted, did he just unwittingly tie a noose around his own neck? Then his father spoke again, breaking the silence.

"Anyway, your grandfather Naobito calls for you, Megumi."

Megumi's gaze then shifted back to the patriarch Gojo. "I will take my leave then, Gojo-sama. Thank you for seeing me." he bows again to the patriarch Gojo and with that, Megumi walked toward the servant who had been waiting for him by the corridor.

"Wait..." Satoru tried to grab his shoulder, desperately wanting to explain and talk, but his father grabbed his wrist before he could do so.

"Satoru, stop... You are no longer engaged to him, so you are not allowed to touch him at all. You've done enough trouble already."

Shit! That was all Satoru could think of as he watched the retreating figure of his supposed bride-to-be, the boy he had fallen in love with in his dreams. His arms fell to his sides, and he clenched his fists.

He had to undo what he had done and win back Zenin Megumi.

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